

Caste in Transition: Modernity and Social Change in Haryanvi Folktales

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Abstract

Caste has historically shaped important aspects of social organisation in Haryana, influencing occupation, kinship, access to resources, social status and relations of power. Yet neither caste nor the society in which it operates has remained unchanged. Processes of education, urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, democratic politics and changing occupational structures have unsettled many older caste-based arrangements without necessarily eliminating caste as a source of identity or social power. Haryanvi folktales offer an important cultural archive through which this tension between continuity and change can be examined. They preserve memories of occupational hierarchy, social distance and inherited stereotypes, but they also contain narratives of mobility, reversal, negotiation and changing claims to status. Drawing upon M. N. Srinivas's concepts of Sanskritisation and dominant caste, while also considering processes described as de-Sanskritisation, re-Sanskritisation and newer forms of identity assertion, this paper examines the ways caste relations are imagined in selected Haryanvi folk narratives. It argues that modernity has not simply replaced caste with a casteless social order; rather, caste has been reworked through new economic opportunities, political competition and changing social aspirations. The paper therefore reads Haryanvi folktales not as transparent records of an unchanging rural past but as a vernacular archive in which hierarchy, mobility, resistance and social transformation continually intersect.

Keywords: Haryanvi folktales, caste, social mobility, Sanskritisation, modernity, occupational change, dominant caste, cultural memory

INTRODUCTION

Caste remains one of the most persistent and at the same time most changing features of Indian social life. It is persistent because birth, kinship, marriage, community affiliation, occupation, access to resources and inherited ideas of social status have historically been connected with caste. It is changing because the social and economic conditions within which caste functions have been transformed by education, migration, industrialisation, urbanisation, electoral democracy, affirmative action and the expansion of new occupations. The result is neither the disappearance of caste nor the simple survival of an unchanged traditional order. What we encounter instead is caste in transition.

This distinction is particularly important for understanding Haryana.

Older descriptions of rural Haryana often emphasised the relative stability of an agrarian social order in which communities were associated with particular occupations and were situated within unequal relationships of landownership, labour, ritual status and social power. Yet contemporary research complicates any picture of the Haryanvi village as a permanently “closed society.” Surinder S. Jodhka's longitudinal research in Haryana, based on revisiting villages after approximately two decades, demonstrates substantial transformations in caste and class relations. Traditional *jajmani*-type dependencies weakened, many caste-specific occupations declined, non-agricultural employment expanded, residential segregation became less rigid in some places, and many Dalit households acquired greater autonomy from locally dominant landowners. At the same time, inequalities in landownership and political influence did not simply disappear. ([ResearchGate](#))

The language of continuity and transformation is therefore more appropriate than either of two extremes: that caste has remained completely unchanged, or that modernity has dissolved it.

This tension between formal equality and enduring social inequality was articulated with extraordinary clarity by B. R. Ambedkar on 25 November 1949, in his final speech to the Constituent Assembly. As India prepared to become a constitutional democracy, Ambedkar warned that the country was entering a “life of contradictions”: political equality would coexist with profound social and economic inequalities. His warning was not an argument against democracy; it was a warning that political democracy required a deeper social democracy if equality was to become meaningful in everyday life. ([Constitution of India](#))

More than seven decades later, this formulation remains useful for thinking about caste. Constitutional citizenship establishes the legal equality of individuals. Social life, however, is shaped not only by constitutional principles but also by inherited structures of property, family, community, marriage, memory and social prestige. The history of modern India has therefore not been a simple movement from caste to castelessness. Modern institutions have certainly challenged many traditional restrictions, but caste itself has also adapted to the opportunities created by modern institutions.

This process is particularly visible in electoral politics. Caste identities that once operated primarily within local structures of occupation, marriage and ritual status can become bases for political mobilisation, representation, reservation claims and collective bargaining. The language may change, the institutional arena may change, and the goals may change, but community identities remain socially consequential.

For this reason, modernity should not automatically be imagined as the opposite of caste.

In some circumstances modernisation weakens caste boundaries. In others it gives caste identities new arenas in which to operate.

Caste as hierarchy—and as a field of mobility

Early sociological discussions often emphasised caste as a hierarchical social system structured around hereditary membership, endogamy, occupational association and notions of ritual status. Such features undoubtedly provide an important starting point. Yet the study of actual caste relations soon demonstrated that caste hierarchy could not adequately be understood as a permanently fixed ladder.

M. N. Srinivas made an especially influential intervention through his concept of Sanskritisation. He used the term to describe a process through which a caste or community located relatively lower in the local hierarchy sought improved status by adopting practices, rituals, beliefs or lifestyles associated with communities enjoying greater prestige. Importantly, Srinivas did not eventually restrict the model of imitation exclusively to Brahmins. A locally dominant caste could itself become the model of emulation.

Sanskritisation therefore introduced movement into an analysis otherwise dominated by hierarchy.

But Srinivas himself recognised an important limitation: such movement often changed the relative position of a group without fundamentally abolishing the hierarchical system. A community might claim a higher position, adopt new cultural practices or reconstruct its social history while the broader logic of ranked status remained intact.

This is especially relevant to the present paper.

Haryanvi folk narratives contain recognisable caste identities and occupational associations, but the characters inhabiting these identities do not always remain obedient to an inflexible hierarchy. They bargain, compete, deceive, imitate, resist and occasionally reverse social expectations. The tale therefore gives us not merely a picture of caste structure but something closer to a narrative of caste dynamics.

The later sociological concept of the dominant caste makes the argument still more useful for Haryana. Ritual status alone does not determine actual power. Numerical strength, ownership of land, economic resources, educational access and political organisation can make a community locally powerful even where its ritual ranking is not theoretically the highest. Srinivas's framework accordingly distinguished ritual, economic and political forms of power rather than treating them as perfectly identical.

In an agrarian region such as Haryana, this distinction is crucial.

Land has historically been more than an economic resource. It has carried prestige, security, political leverage and the ability to command labour. The transformation of agriculture following commercialisation and the Green Revolution altered these relationships substantially, but it did not automatically distribute resources equally.

Jodhka's research shows both sides of this process. On the one hand, older caste-based economic dependencies weakened sharply. Traditional service arrangements declined, younger generations increasingly sought employment outside agriculture, Dalit dependence upon dominant-caste farmers diminished, and caste occupations ceased to operate with their earlier rigidity. On the other hand, land

remained disproportionately concentrated and older landowning communities continued to retain important forms of social and political influence.

This is precisely why “transition” is more analytically useful than either “tradition” or “modernity” considered in isolation.

From Sanskritisation to changing caste identities

The movement of caste groups in modern India has also become more complicated than the original Sanskritisation model could fully explain.

A community seeking upward social recognition may adopt practices associated with higher-status groups. Yet democratic politics, affirmative action and the constitutional recognition of historically disadvantaged communities can generate a different form of status strategy: communities may emphasise rather than suppress historically marginalised identities.

Sociological literature has variously discussed processes of de-Sanskritisation, ethnicisation, backward-status assertion and identity reclamation. Some teaching and sociological literature also uses the expression re-Sanskritisation for later shifts back towards Sanskritic or higher-status cultural models. These terms should be employed cautiously, because they do not all possess the same theoretical status as Srinivas's original concept. Nevertheless, they point towards an important reality: caste identity in modern India can move in more than one direction.

A caste may seek ritual elevation in one context and constitutionally recognised backward status in another.

What appears contradictory at first is intelligible once caste is understood not simply as ritual position but as an arena involving dignity, resources, recognition and political opportunity.

This multidirectional character of caste mobility has particular relevance to folk narrative. Folk stories frequently contain acts of social comparison: one group imitates another; a supposedly superior person is exposed as foolish; a subordinate character acquires power; a wealthy person lacks wisdom; ritual prestige comes into conflict with practical intelligence.

These narrative reversals should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that caste hierarchy disappeared. Instead, they tell us that hierarchy itself was continuously being imagined, negotiated and contested.

Occupational change and the question of modernity

Occupation provides perhaps the clearest illustration of this transition.

Traditional caste analysis associated communities with hereditary occupations—the barber with hair cutting, the potter with pottery, the leather-working caste with leather, the washerman with washing clothes, the blacksmith with iron work, and so forth.

Modern economic life has substantially weakened many such exclusive associations.

The activity may survive while the caste monopoly over it disappears.

This distinction is important.

A barber shop is not simply the modern continuation of hereditary barber service. It operates increasingly through a market relationship. Pottery can become an industrial or artistic commodity rather than merely a hereditary village service. Leather goods can be manufactured and marketed through large-scale industries disconnected from the caste identity historically associated with leatherwork. Laundry, beauty services, dairying, textile production, metalwork and food processing can similarly move into market structures in which ownership, labour and caste identity do not necessarily coincide.

Jodhka provides unusually useful evidence from Haryana itself. In his recent reflections on caste, he notes that traditional caste occupations in the Haryana villages he studied had nearly disappeared or changed their economic grammar. Barbers operated commercial establishments and were not necessarily members of the traditional barber caste; Dalits increasingly refused stigmatised hereditary occupations and sought work in the non-farm economy; service relationships increasingly became cash transactions rather than caste-bound obligations.

This has major implications for the argument of this paper.

Modernity does not necessarily eliminate the occupation.

It can de-caste the occupation without fully de-casting society.

The distinction is important enough to emphasise.

A profession once associated with a particular caste may become open to anyone who possesses capital, skill, certification or market access. Yet unequal access to capital, education, networks, property and institutional power may mean that economic liberalisation does not automatically produce equal mobility for all communities.

Thus an older relationship between caste and occupation can weaken while another relationship between caste and economic advantage survives in altered form.

This is a much more nuanced argument than saying that modernity has either succeeded or failed.

Industrialisation, urbanisation and the changing village

Industrialisation adds another layer to this process.

Haryana's proximity to Delhi, expansion of industrial belts, growth of towns, improved transport and increased migration have brought rural populations into closer contact with non-agricultural employment. Jodhka's Haryana research found growing interaction between villages and neighbouring urban-industrial economies and a marked decline in young people's desire to remain in agriculture.

Such developments can weaken older relations of personal dependency.

A landless worker who previously relied on a dominant-caste landowner for employment and credit may find employment in a nearby factory, construction site, government office or service sector. Economic alternatives can produce social distance from the traditional patron.

But industrialisation does not enter an empty social space.

Individuals carry caste networks, family histories and unequal educational resources into new occupations.

The village may change without becoming socially anonymous.

The modern economy therefore transforms caste while also giving it new contexts.

Marriage: where modernity meets social boundary

Perhaps nowhere is this contradiction more visible than in marriage.

Occupational restrictions may loosen considerably while marriage boundaries remain comparatively resilient.

Prem Chowdhry's detailed research on Haryana demonstrates how caste, clan, *gotra*, territorial rules and ideas of family honour continue to shape disputes surrounding marriage. At the same time, her work shows that these institutions themselves are not frozen remains of an earlier society. Caste panchayats and community authorities adapt inherited practices to contemporary struggles over status, power and legitimacy.

This observation is particularly valuable for interpreting folk narratives.

Marriage, daughterhood, kinship, family honour and social boundary occur repeatedly in Haryana's storytelling traditions because the household is one of the primary places where larger structures of caste become intimate.

Caste is therefore not experienced only through public hierarchy.

It enters whom one may marry, where one may eat, whose household one enters, which relationships carry honour and which transgressions produce conflict.

Folktales make these abstractions human.

Why folktales matter

This brings us to the central methodological concern of the present study.

Folktales should not be treated as sociological questionnaires from the past.

A folktale cannot demonstrate statistically how often discrimination occurred, nor can a caste character appearing in a tale be assumed to represent the actual behaviour of an entire community.

The value of folklore lies elsewhere.

Folk narratives preserve social imagination.

They show which distinctions were sufficiently familiar to need no explanation; which occupations carried particular cultural associations; which groups became objects of humour; which relationships generated anxiety; which kinds of mobility could be imagined; and which reversals audiences found satisfying.

A Bania in a comic tale may signify calculation or miserliness. A Brahmin may represent ritual authority but can also become the victim of humour. A Jat may be represented through practical intelligence, physicality or agrarian common sense. A service-caste character may enter through occupation. Such characterisations must never be treated as ethnographic truths about real communities. They are narrative stereotypes, and that distinction is crucial.

Yet stereotypes themselves are historically meaningful.

They show how one community imagined another.

Even more significantly, folktales frequently disturb the very hierarchy they seem to reproduce. The person assumed to be foolish turns out to be clever. The socially prestigious character becomes ridiculous. A poor character defeats a wealthy opponent. A woman provides the solution that men fail to discover.

Humour, inversion, irony and trickery can therefore create temporary spaces in which established relationships are turned upside down.

The existence of such narrative reversals does not prove the existence of social equality.

It demonstrates something subtler: hierarchy was never beyond narration, criticism or laughter.

From caste structure to caste dynamics

The present paper therefore moves away from understanding Haryanvi caste relations solely through the vocabulary of a rigid closed system.

That model captures important aspects of hereditary hierarchy, but it cannot adequately explain the processes through which caste identities have been reconstructed under modern conditions.

Instead, this study approaches caste through four interacting dimensions:

inheritance, because caste remains connected to birth and collective memory;

hierarchy, because access to land, dignity and resources has historically been unequal;

mobility, because communities and individuals continually negotiate social location;

and transformation, because industrialisation, education, migration, democratic politics and occupational diversification alter the conditions under which caste operates.

Haryanvi folktales provide an especially valuable site in which these dimensions can be brought together.

Their worlds preserve older occupational structures and social stereotypes, yet the tales themselves repeatedly imagine mobility, contest, adaptation and reversal. When these narrative worlds are placed alongside sociological evidence from contemporary Haryana, the result is neither a story of complete continuity nor one of complete rupture.

It is a story of caste being continually remade.

This paper therefore asks not simply whether caste survives in Haryana, but how its meanings change.

What happens when inherited occupation becomes market occupation?

What happens when ritual status no longer corresponds neatly with economic power?

What happens when historically marginalised communities reject rather than imitate dominant cultural models?

What happens when democratic politics converts caste identity into collective political assertion?

And, most importantly for literary study, how do Haryanvi folktales remember, reproduce, question or anticipate these changes?

Approached in this manner, folktales cease to be quaint residues of a supposedly unchanging rural past. They become a vernacular archive of an ongoing social conversation—one in which caste is remembered as hierarchy, experienced as power, negotiated as identity and repeatedly reimagined through narrative.

SOCIAL MOBILITY:

It is termed as the evidence of social mobility in the caste system with the increasing discrepancy between caste and occupations, withering away of Jajmani obligations, the rigidity regarding purity and pollution and acceptance of secular lifestyle by adopting the style of life of a higher caste.. A lower caste could change its position in the caste hierarchy and move upward. However, as has been pointed out by Andre Beteille, *it was not merely by adopting the rituals and life styles of the upper castes that lower caste could move upwards. Such a process was invariably accompanied by some real improvement in the material condition of a group. However, those who sanskritised their style of life didnot question the system of caste hierarchy or its ideology. They merely tried to change their position in the system. While individual castes moved up or down, the structure remained same.*¹

In older days, Srinivas points out, there were two major sources of mobility. First was the fluidity of the political system, which made it feasible for new castes to assume the status of knowledge and exercise power. Second was the availability of marginal land which could be brought under cultivation.² In Haryanvi folktales, we do find instances of caste and class mobility. Over all each Varna lives in harmony with another varna as can be seen in the occasional exchange of comic jokes among people from different castes.

¹ Andre Beteille

² Srinivas

It is quite obvious that a change of position may take place either along a horizontal axis called horizontal mobility or along vertical axis called vertical mobility.

Horizontal Social Mobility can be defined as the move of individuals or groups from one position to another in society. According to Sorokin, *horizontal social mobility means transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level, shifting of religions, shifting from one factory to another in the same occupational status, from one family or another by divorce and remarriage are all instances of it*³. Anthony Giddens consider that *there is a great deal of mobility along the lateral direction in modern societies*.⁴

The second kind of mobility is the vertical mobility where there is an upward or downward change in the rank of an individual or group. There are various instances like promotion or demotion, a change in income, marriage to a person of higher or lower status, or even a move to a better or worse neighbourhood. According to direction of transition, there are two types of vertical social mobility : ascending and descending or “social climbing” and “social sinking”- respectively .Anthony Giddens refers to vertical mobility as *movement up or down the socio economic scale*. According to him, *those who gain in property, income or status are said to be upwardly mobile, while those who move in the opposite direction are downwardly mobile*.⁵

SANSKRITIZATION:

M.N. Srinivas formulated and contributed immensely to the concept of Sanskritization as a process of mobility in caste. He refers to Sanskritization as a “*process by which a now Hindu caste or tribal or other groups, changes its customs, mutual ideology and way of life in direction of high and frequently ‘twice born’ caste*”⁶ (Srinivas 1966) Sanskritization has been prevalent throughout history and has assumed various forms. It has been used in folk narratives as mechanism to bridge the gap between secular and ritual rank. Whenever a caste achieves secular power it tries to legitimize its status by acquiring traditional symbols of high castes by adopting their customs, rituals, benefits and ideas such as vegetarianism and teetotalism. Besides, they try to obtain the services of Brahmin priests, visited pilgrimage centers and acquired knowledge of sacred texts. In the folktale *Khand ka Batau*⁷ the services of the Brahmin are availed by the Jat for getting out of his dilemma.

The census recording was considered excellent source of making claim to higher status. This claim according to Srinivas was upgraded in subsequent operations. For example if in one census the caste claimed to be Vaishya, in the subsequent operations it would lay claim to Brahmin or Kshatriya. This attempt was followed by attempts made by the castes to emulate the lifestyle of the respective caste they laid claim to. The status attributes of highly ranked warrior ruler category i.e. Kshatriya and the Brahmin served as model for most upwardly mobile groups.

³ Sorokin

⁴ Anthony Giddens

⁵ Srinivas 1966

⁶ ibid

⁷ Recorded in cassette

The relative position of different castes in the local hierarchy is difficult to pinpoint particularly with respect to the middle range castes. Each caste lays claim to a position which is frequently not conceded by the others. Further, over generations, some of the low castes have tried to Sanskritize their customs and lifestyle in order to improve their rank in the hierarchy, with varying degrees of success. Sanskritization continues to be an important and many-sided process of cultural and social change in rural areas. In naming children, names indicative of caste are now being given up in favour of Sanskritic names. Also, the names of the high gods and goddesses of Hinduism are added on to the worship of local deities. The influence of radio and television, and especially popular television serials like Mahabharat and Ramayan is considerable in this regard. The net effect has been to strengthen what may be called 'Sanskritic values'. The influence of the electronic media has often run counter to the spread of secular and modern values.

The politicization of the communal situation in the country has also contributed to strengthening religious fundamentalism in Haryana and consequently of Sanskritic values among Hindus.

DE-SANSKRITIZATION:

Another very significant pattern of Sanskritization involves increasing Puritanism on the part of the castes who reject superiority of the twice born. In Haryanvi folktale, The Jat and Brahmin, farmer takes a dig at the Brahmin by a retort challenging the hierarchy of knowledge constructed by them. Such a process of de-sanskritization contributes to crystallization of new groups and great political mobilization.

RE-SANSKRITIZATION:

Re-sanskritization is another process in the endeavour to attain mobility. In this case formerly westernized or modernized groups discard many symbols of modernization and revert to traditional sanskritic life styles.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Sanskritization was a process of social mobility which resulted only in positional changes for particular castes and their sections i.e. the individual castes moved up or down the hierarchy while the structure remained the same.

WESTERNIZATION:

Srinivas defines "*Westernization as the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels technology, institutions, ideology and values.*"⁸ Westernization is therefore a vast, multidimensional and a complex process which impinges upon various domains through a number of institutions and hence has a significant bearing on caste mobility. It not only alters the existing set up but also opens fresh avenues and doors for social mobility. A large number of inter-related factors are responsible for this.

Under the British rule, land became a saleable commodity and this had far reaching consequences for mobility. The members of low caste who could afford to buy land could now become upwardly mobile and those who lost their rights to lands suffered downward mobility.

The introduction of new means of transport and communication served to dilute the restrictions and inhibitions associated with caste.

⁸ Srinivas 1966

The British rule provided fresh avenues for social mobility altering the nature of pre-existing institutions such as schools and colleges which opened their doors to all castes and establishing new ones such as army, bureaucracy and law courts which recruited members on the basis of merit and hence provide ample source of mobility. Most of the new economic opportunities generated under the British rule were taken advantage of by the upper castes who availed of the educational facilities.

*Westernization accelerated the mobility process in more ways than one. On one hand it was a desirable mechanism of attaining mobility, on the other, it generated mobility also because the 'westernized' become a model for emulation for the others.*⁹

SECULARIZATION:

The term "secularization" implies that what was previously regarded as religious ceases to be such and it also implies a process of differentiation in the various aspect of society, economy, polity, laws and morality becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other. In the traditional set up the principle of purity and pollution was the prime determinant of the status, ranking, occupation and the general lifestyle. With increasing emphasis on rationality and education the notion of purity pollution weakened and today it is common to see people of different castes work together in factories or rub shoulders against each other and even dine together. The new law based on universalism and the constitutional recognition of equality for all citizens and the declaration of India as a secular state has served to abolish discrimination based on caste.

Education was the prerogative of the Brahmins and 'twice born' castes in the traditional set up. During the British rule educational institutions were opened to all the knowledge had a secular and rational basis. Besides this education instilled the minds of people with new principles of the justice, liberty and equality. The educated elite fought against discriminations on the basis of caste.

Education had such a deep impact on the pace and pattern of mobility that it created a new middle class. After independence, in an effort to uplift the SC, ST and OBC's through education, seats have been reserved for them in educational institutions. Since then these benefits have been appropriated by a small section. It has resulted in new cleavages among these sections. The cleavages are aspect of mobility patterns based on those who have and do not have access to education.

Pradeep Bose has identified two main mobility courses i.e. *movement for consolidation and movements for assertion. In the former the caste associations tried to raise their status through census operations and petitioning the rulers. These moves were legitimized through Sanskritization and maintaining distance from equivalent castes. In the other mobility course represented economic grievances and deprivation. These castes formed associations to alter the existing political and economic relations.*¹⁰ For example Yadavs in Haryana illustrated this pattern.

The backward sections have found opportunities for upward mobility on account of 'protective discrimination' policies which involves reservation of seats in educational institutions, freeship and scholarships, Besides, there are reservations in jobs and legislative bodies. These welfare measures have

⁹ M.N.Srinivasa

¹⁰ Pradeep Bose

benefited only a small section who have claims to much higher status than counterparts of the same caste resulting in further divisions in the castes.

INDUSTRIALIZATION:

Industrialization accelerate the rate of social mobility in various ways. It provides employment opportunities which emphasize on achievement and qualifications rather than caste. In the factories jobs are hierarchically graded according to qualifications and experience rather than ritual ranking. These employment opportunities are open to all and prove a source of upward mobility for the landless laborers.

Industrialization has brought with it a new work set up and work culture based on technical division of labour and uniform standards. In the factories workers from different castes work together on same machines irrespective of considerations regarding purity and pollution.

The mobility in cities is largely on account of achievement through education and new occupational avenues. Class as system of stratification is replacing caste. But caste divisions are also simultaneously crystallizing in the form of caste associations, federations etc. Urbanization has create greater avenues for both vertical and horizontal mobility. Horizontal mobility characterizes both caste and class in cities. Formation of caste associations is an example of former and job transfers is an illustration of the latter.

The social mobility among scheduled castes can be understood better in the light of some empirical data as the tables shows. For example, the literacy rate of the scheduled castes have increased . The number of scheduled caste employees in the government offices and administration have increased . The number of scheduled castes employed in public sector organizations have increased . In rural areas, the percentage of the poor among the scheduled castes has declined .

Another indication of social change and social mobility among the scheduled castes in the rural and urban societies can be inferred from the incidents of caste tensions and caste conflicts. Most of the violence against the scheduled castes took place due to their occupations. Some of the jobs prescribed by the discriminatory caste customs have been to perform the age-old degraded occupation such as disposing off dead cattle, midwifery and beggary or forced labour without wage. Increasingly, the scheduled castes have refused to obey the authority of the non scheduled castes regarding restrictions on the use of public places such as village tanks, wells, streets, temples, etc. The provision of adult franchise has also brought about political awakening and self respect among the scheduled castes. In economic matters, a scheduled castes person cannot be easily made bonded labour on nominal or no wage. Similarly, it is no longer easy to dispossess them of their land and houses. These refusals and non-conformities have created situations of caste conflicts and caste tensions.

The dominant castes that have traditionally thrived on the exploitative relationship with the scheduled castes are provoked into violence when the scheduled castes questions the existing relationship as mentioned before. The violence against scheduled castes may be seen in the incidents of forcible snatching of properties, rape and selling of scheduled caste women, burning and killing of the scheduled caste people as seen in Mirchpur and Jhajjar episodes.

The caste conflict as an expression of social mobility among the scheduled castes can easily be observed in rural areas. This is less so in urban areas due to greater degree of modernization and social development through education, secular employment, and economic and technological change

Conclusion:Society as a Cybernetic System

The cybernetic model operates as a kind of self regulating set of devices, gathering information of the status of its activities and using it as feedback to maintain the system in a homeostatic position.¹¹ The same model is chosen as a tentative one to explain the dynamics of Indian society. The Brahmanical group as intelligence and information controlling agency regulates the rest of the social activities so that the social order created by them does not go out of control and status quo is maintained, despite the stresses and strains that it is subjected to, both from inside and outside. The energy needed to run a cybernetic model is equated to the productive contributions of Dalit groups which have to be kept in a servile position through structural and other means so that they do not threaten the rest of the society nor tend to destroy it by trying to liberate themselves from their subordinate position. Violence becomes an integral and crucial part of such a system wherein Dalits have to be regulated and conditioned so that the value system they follow does not permit them to raise a voice of protest against other groups. Even the argument of Gramsci¹² that in the struggle between the haves and have-nots in the society, the “*War of Position*” is crucial in deciding the outcome of the issues is relevant in the context of Hindu Social order. This is more so in the case of Brahmins who are always highly conscious group in the whole Hindu social order and who manage and manipulate the consciousness of other groups in order to sustain their own social standing as well as decision-making on crucial aspects of society.

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¹¹ Norbert Wiener (1950) used systems perspective and cybernetics in studying the management of human labour. Gregory Bateson (1935, 1958 and 1971) drew on cybernetics, the theory of types and the concept of ‘Schismogenesis’ in providing Anthropological interpretations of the growth, if not the origin, of conflicts. P.N. Rastogi (1975) used this model to explain factional conflicts and other political phenomena in Indian context.

¹² Gramsci